

614-EBB-0.9 Pacific Heights San. by Wm. Wood "B" 14th Concord St

Dec 44

HISTORY

HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND "B"
14TH ARMORED DIVISION
A.P.O. 446
U. S. ARMY

L-1168
(2)

PERIOD: 2 December 44 to 31 December 44

Combat Command "B" CP is located in schoolhouse in Bosselhausen, France. CC"B" troops consist of the 19 AIB, B-125 Eng and B-84 Med. The troops are spending most of their time on maintenance of vehicles and equipment. On CC order, 19 AIB and B-125 are making route and road Rcn of area to our N and NE. This is in conjunction with plans being formulated for moving the CC in along two or three routes in the same general direction.

This is our first experience in contact with civilians of both French and German descent and at present the contact seems to be friendly on both sides. Our IPW officer investigated one civilian suspected of Nazi leanings and found SS uniforms and German weapons which were turned over to the Mayor of Bosselhausen.

The weather has not been good and continues unfavorable. We have been having light rains during both day and night. The continued Rcn of the area around us and to the N and NE established the fact that all our heavy vehicles and tanks would be roadbound. Assembly areas would have to be towns where vehicles and tanks could disperse and still remain on roads.

On 6th December, we received verbal orders from Div to move 1 Co of 19 AIB to Gamsheim to reinforce the 94th Cav, who were attacking that town. Later another company was ordered to move out together with one battery from 500 AFA. Major Green of 19 AIB was in command of this task force. Both our S-3, Major Booth and our S-2, Captain Prine have been making various route Rcn. Their reports also indicate the impassability of the terrain for tanks and heavy vehicles.

The 48th Tank Battalion joined the Combat Command 7th December. A meeting of the BN Staff with Co Commanders at our CP enabled us to gather much valuable information from the battle experiences of this Battalion. Arrangements were made to have special training in the attack of towns based on these experiences.

We received word that the 19 AIB had taken Gamsheim at 1000, 8 December and they remained in control of the CC "B" control, having successfully completed mission.

CC was alerted at 1200, 9 December, for move in direction of Haguenau to flank of 79 Div and destroy enemy pockets thereon.

On 10 December we were put on 6 hour alert. All radio nets opened but were on listening status only. Finally received telephone call from G-3 to prepare to move by daylight 12 December with the mission of marching to Lauter River, seize and hold crossings in the Salmbach-Schleithal area. Entire CC was alerted and orders given to Unit Commanders. Actual movement took place 0200, 13 December. We marched, blackout, via Hochfelden and Haguenau to N edge of woods just S of Surbourg arriving this position 0600, 13 Dec. We waited for daylight before making further move. 499 AFA joined CC here.

Rcn elements and 19 AIB moved out at 0745 encountering light enemy resistance along road Surbourg-Schwabwiller-Bechesdorf-Hattan. Progress slow, enemy fighting only rear guard action. Finally held up by blown bridge NE of Hattan between Hattan and Buhl. Eng and bridging equipment were sent for. Considerable delay in getting necessary treadway sections. Enemy had bridge site well covered with accurate mortar and small arms fire. Engrs unable to work in daylight. CP set up for night in Niederbetschdorf - 19 AIB in Hattan; 48th Tk in Oberbetschdorf. Bridge was completed before daylight of 14 Dec. 19 AIB moved out to attack Buhl 0800, 14 December and despite heavy mortar and S/A weapons fire, Buhl was taken at 0945. Throughout this entire action, the Combat Commander had maintained a Fwd CP well up with front line elements in order that he would be in best position to influence the action in one way or another.

19 AIB pushed on from Buhl without loss of time and captured towns of Trimbach and Siegen and continued advancing on Salmbach. Subjected to mortar, arty, and S/A fire as they approached town, however were able to continue their advance. By 1620 had moved on objective and outposted the town. Ordered to assist 79 Div in capturing Lauterburg.

48th Tk Bn, in the meantime, left our column at Buhl and proceeded toward objective via Croettwiller-Oberlauterbach. Received some fire near Oberlauterbach but were able to proceed on toward Salmbach; entering town at 1650. Hq CC"B", following 19 AIB, received few rounds Arty fire while halted in Trimbach. We closed in Siegen and CP opened in schoolhouse at 1630.

At 1000, 15 Dec, 19 AIB again moved to the attack with mission of seizing and holding crossings over Lauter River. They encountered heavy mortar, S/A and Arty fire. They received supporting fires from 499 and by nightfall had woods N of Salmbach cleared of enemy, and had advanced to the river. Our boundary changed, on left flank, to include Schleithal and mission to include seizing of river crossings N of this town. Task Force Dunwoody was given the mission of seizing and outposting Schleithal and to act as reserve for B and C-19 AIB. River crossings not as yet taken. We were informed by Div that treadway bridge was not available but wooden bridges may be constructed, if material is available.

The 499 AFA firing has been very effective. Ln plane reported a roadblock at E end of Schleithal and it was quickly knocked out by Arty fire.

The 48th Tk maintained contact with 315 Inf on our right. Fired C-48 indirect unobserved in afternoon, B Co fired same mission at night. Co A-48 is supporting 19 AIB in their attack.

Finally at 1530 on 16 Dec, C-19 secured crossing of Lauter River N of Schleithal while in the meantime B-19 had sent men across in assault boats at crossing N of Salmbach. Both companies then sent patrols N into woods from the bridge sites. A bridge was completed by early evening of the 16th at crossing N of Salmbach. Combat Commander ordered 1 1/2 ton bridge constructed at crossing N of Schleithal as soon as possible. Construction was finally started after midnight of the 16th Dec. Shortly after that, a phone call from 19th AIB was received stating that B Co bridge at Salmbach had been knocked out by enemy Arty fire. Reconstruction was started immediately and new bridge completed about 1100 on the 17th Dec.

The 19 AIB maintained day and night patrols of area N of river all the way to Ziegfried Line. Each days reports brought in evidence of increased enemy activity in the building of roadblocks - tank traps and laying of mines and barbed wire.

Our primary mission now is to develop enemy strength and disposition N and NW to RR between Schaidt and Steinfeld, both towns, according to our maps, well fortified positions in German West Wall.

Combat Command CP remains at Seigen. The 19 AIB, 48 Tk Bn and D-94 Cav continue day and night patrol activity. Task Force Greenbaum organized and given mission of harrasing enemy in Steinfeld and endeavor to relieve pressure against CCA on our left. Mission not completed due to darkness, however they ran into some activity - reported killing 4 Germans - lost 1 man killed, believed due to booby trap; took several prisoners and brought back information on enemy dispositions.

We received notice from CG that 48th would relieve the 25th Tk with CCA and the 25th would be attached to CCB. We also began making plans for a possible move from present positions to the SE in the event of German counterattack across Rhine N of Strasbourg. Information from Corps, gives strong indication that such an attack is good possibility.

A patrol from 19 AIB learned, today, the hard way of the type enemy we have against us when they lost 1 man killed and 2 men wounded upon investigating a booby trapped dead German soldier.

At 1815, 19 Dec, 25 Tk Bn closed in our area putting CP in school building in Schleithal. Bn CO reported, in person, to the Combat Commander.

The 19 AIB and D-94 are continuing active patrolling N of Lauter River. Boundary between CCA and CCB is changed - is now the RR running NE along edge of woods, between Wissembourg and Schaidt. General activity a little quieter giving all troops time and opportunity for cleaning of clothing and equipment and maintenance of vehicles and weapons. We are maintaining contact with both CCA on our left and 315 Inf of the 79 Div on our right. The 315 has operated some troops in our zone N of the river for our mutual benefit and support.

On 22 Dec, CP remains at Seigen. Patrolling of roads of Lauter River continues and work is being supervised and checked by Combat Commander and Staff. Our Engr Co., B-125, has prepared demolitions and booby traps around our bridges across the Lauter River. We received word from Div to be especially on the alert for enemy paratroopers which are known to have been dropped behind our lines mostly in rear areas, all units alerted for this new threat to our security and communications. We received word at 1030 this morning that Bn CO, Lt. Col. Alspach, 19 AIB, was killed by "Bouncing Betty" mine. The 499 continues firing missions, both observed and unobserved on reported enemy positions and installations. We lost D-94 today - reverted to Div control and 25 Tk Bn assumed detail for patrols and outposts that D-94 had established.

On 23 Dec we were alerted for move to SW in general direction of Surbourg. We are to be relieved in our present area by the 79 Inf Div. They completed moving into our zone by 1300, 24 Dec, Christmas Eve. Our elements began moving to new area at 1715 by infiltration, one company at a time. We were completely closed by 2220. Our CP is now located in schoolhouse at Schwabwiller, France about 2 miles E of Surbourg. During the past few days, several promotions were made in our staff, Exec O Lucas is now Lt Col Lucas, Capt Hollmeyer went to Major and our Ln O is now Capt McNamara.

Christmas Day, 25 Dec 44, CCB CP in Schwabwiller, France. Immediately after breakfast the CO and the entire staff visited the Commanding General to pay their respects. The Colonel was complimented on the fine work done by CCB patrols N of the Lauter River during the past two weeks. The CG also expressed his approval of the work done by the entire Combat Command during the period.

The Combat Command now consists of 19 AIB, 25 Tk Bn, with C-136 Ord and C-84 Med in support. Various plans are being formulated for counterattacks from any one of three or four different directions. The division is in Corps reserve. In the meantime, Rcn sections from the 19 and 25 are reconnoitering the surrounding area and road nets. Also we are making necessary plans and arrangements for a demonstration to be given by a Seventh Army team on counter sabotage measures. This demonstration took place 0900, 29 Dec, and proved very beneficial.

The Combat Command again alerted for move to be made, today, to Vic Bouxwiller. Head of Column crossed IP at Soultz at 1900, 30 Dec. Due to rather bad condition of roads, progress was slow. Finally closed in new area at 0340, 31 Dec 44. Combat Command CP set up in tavern in Hattmatt, France. Our troops consist of 19 AIB, 25 Tk Bn, A-94 Cav, with C-136 Ord in support.

This move concluded our operations for year of 1944. It has been a good year, on the whole. We have learned many things; we have gained combat experience; and we have helped bring our enemy closer to final defeat.

A list of officers concerned with past operations follows:-

Colonel Francis J Gillespie, Commanding
Lt Col Edward D Lucas, Exec
Major Rivers E Booth, S-3
Major Glynn L Prine, S-2
Major John A Hollmeyer, S-4
Captain Richard S King, Comm O and S-3 Air
Capt Joseph G McNamara, Ln O
1st Lt Jesse A Bolson, Asst Comm O
WOJG Carl W Hennige, Trans O
Capt Harold H Dunwoody, Hq Co Commander
1st Lt Eugene H Loughrin, Tk Sect Ldr and Ln O
2nd Lt Joseph W Savage, Maint O
Major Philip B Daniels, Surgeon
Capt Arthur S Haynen, Dental Officer
Capt Paul G Gebauer, Chaplain
Capt Bernard D Sexton, Chaplain
1st Lt Charles H Marler, Chaplain